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**Commission on Population and Development**
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**General debate on national experience in population matters: adolescents and youth**

## Statement submitted by World Mission Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.9/2012/2.

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## Statement

The major goals of World Mission Foundation are to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals on poverty, global health and social development, to transform policies into action among African immigrants and other minorities and to reflect a commitment to the sexual well-being of adolescents and youth. It also works to inculcate in adolescents and youth the power to make moral decisions about their reproductive and sexual health.

Through its global project on health, My Sisters' Health Initiative, World Mission Foundation works with networks in Africa, the Caribbean and the United States of America to address social issues, HIV/AIDS and health care in respect of adolescents and youth in Africa and adolescents and youth of African descent. World Mission Foundation urges advocacy on health and social issues for African nations as well as the need to implement policies on improved health and programmes that will reach rural communities, including on HIV/AIDS and other health issues affecting women, youth, adolescents, families and children.

The organization is also committed to implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Millennium Development Goals.

The organization has developed the following projects:

(a) **Window of Hope**. An educational enrichment programme for schools and colleges that has introduced health-care clubs in post-primary schools, focusing on education about reproductive and sexual health and HIV/AIDS. Youths are mentored so that they can tell their stories and experiences in shared forums, through drama and talking points, as well as exhibit creative traits in disseminating information;

(b) **World Mission Foundation Brain Education Youth Opportunity project**. A global network for adolescents and youth to help them to develop models/documents that contain practical guidelines on reproductive issues, targeting adolescents and youth across the nations of Africa and adolescents and youth of African descent. This is achieved through the interactive approach of the social media networks.

### Characterizing adolescents and youth in the Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals

The period of adolescence and youth is a period of human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood, and between puberty and maturity. Physical, psychological, physiological and emotional changes are characteristic of the period. It is also a period of struggle, when adolescents and youth move out of childhood into responsible adulthood while developing a personality. In most countries, this period extends from 13 to 18 years of age in girls and from 14 to 18 years of age in boys. During these years, physical and sexual maturity occur, and sexual characteristics and behaviour develop, resulting in male and female sexuality and roles. The reproductive organs of girls begin to develop, as evident in their monthly cycles, while changes occur in male voices and their shoulders gradually become more broad. Adolescents also strive to search for emotional, social and behavioural independence, want to communicate and be with their peers and achieve

self-development. In this period, adolescents and youth also experience confusion, seek explanations and search for knowledge while working on their sense of personal identity.

They encounter emotional turmoil due to hormonal stress and the quest to attain sexual and physical maturity. During this period, adolescents and youth focus on their capabilities, strengths and needs; it is also a period in which reproductive/sexual issues, including teen pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and sexual violence, are of greatest concern. In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development addressed diverse needs in the area of adolescent reproductive health. Chapter VII of the Programme of Action has a section devoted to adolescents, with the objectives (7.44) of addressing adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues, and substantially reducing all adolescent pregnancies. Countries, with the support of the international community, are urged to protect and promote the rights of adolescents to reproductive health education, information and care (7.46), and Governments, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, are urged to meet with the special needs of adolescents and to establish appropriate programmes to respond to those needs (7.47). The following should be made available and accessible to adolescents and youth: access to reproductive and sexual health services including family planning; family-planning counselling; prenatal care; safe delivery and postnatal care; prevention and appropriate treatment of infertility; prevention and management of the consequences of abortion; treatment of reproductive tract infections, sexually transmitted diseases and other reproductive health conditions; and education and counselling relevant to human sexuality, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and infertility. Both the Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals called for unfettered universal access to family planning methods to support integrated, comprehensive programmes that holistically address the reproductive and sexual health of adolescents.

**Strategic framework of commitment on reproductive and sexual health issues for adolescents and youth**

Adolescents and youth comprise about 1.8 billion of the world's population. This huge population deserves an education that will enable it to understand the realities of their existing environment and the world. Education needs to be provided to adolescents and youth on developmental issues concerning their reproductive and sexual rights as part of collective global and sustainable efforts to meet the demands of the Programme of Action and the Goals. This group needs to be encouraged, by trusting their views with respect to reproductive and sexual health, and population growth, and they need to be provided with successful awareness models that will strengthen their abilities to meet life's challenges.

The strategic framework of commitment on reproductive and sexual health for adolescents and youth in the context of the Programme of Action and the Goals should focus on education, social investments, a rights-based approach, gender perspectives and joint programmes that will allow for an integrated approach to achieving the Programme of Action and the Goals.

**Recommendations**

We recommend the following:

(a) Promoting the reproductive and sexual health and rights of adolescents and youth. Reproduction is both a private and public matter yet it also concerns public health. Education and awareness programmes that promote curricula dealing with global concerns should include such issues as sexuality, HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, gender-based violence, puberty, gender-based reproductive rights, personal development, peer education and mentorship skills;

(b) Extending the same education and awareness programmes in communities to adolescents and youth who are out of school. Rural and community support centres should be established to encourage partnerships and collaborative efforts through integrated approaches between the community, non-governmental organizations and international agencies;

(c) Accelerating the involvement of all stakeholders. It is important to get the international community, Governments, policymakers, civil society and non-governmental organizations involved in enhancing investments in gender responsiveness and social protection in respect of reproductive issues, sexuality and population concerns;

(d) The Commission on Population and Development should utilize its collective voice to raise awareness of the importance of a development approach to the reproductive rights of adolescents and youth and on population protection initiatives; to influence policy discussions in this regard; and to work on capacity-building activities;

(e) The Commission should extend its individual, corporate and non-governmental organization networks at all levels to promote greater and improved access to use of reproductive commodities that will prevent health-related concerns such as HIV/AIDS and other related infections, unwanted pregnancies and abortions;

(f) The Commission should remind the world that the reproductive and sexual health of adolescents and youth and the related education thereon constitute not only a right but also:

(i) A path to global sustainable development;

(ii) A necessary component to achieving the goals of the Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals and the agenda concerning the world's population of 7 billion;

(g) The Commission, in collaboration with civil society, non-governmental organizations and other groups, should take a leadership role in promoting reproductive, sexuality and population programmes for adolescents and youth;

(h) Developing a comprehensive strategic communication package, which would address the behavioural changes in adolescents and youth and include communication strategies relevant to their personality development, including from gender and cultural perspectives. Special attention should be focused on peer communication empowerment strategies for adolescents and youth;

(i) Fostering ethically based approaches that will enable adolescents and youth to develop their potentials, identities and mental and life skills while working with their rights;

(j) Recognizing the significant need to provide reproductive and sexual health services and to address the accessibility and affordability of these at all levels.

In conclusion, through its My Sisters' Health Initiative, World Mission Foundation would like to reaffirm its overall global and regional commitments to partner with the Commission in developing a comprehensive approach and a successful curriculum model for adolescents and youth of African descent on reproductive, and sexual health education, including population issues.